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Pentagon's Outlook

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Speed Is the Keynote of New Trends
Pointing to Greater Deterrent Forces

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The New Frontier in the Pentagon still has a hazy look.

But, after two and a half months in office, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, who has set a whirlwind pace, has made some decisions that provide clues to the future. The actions taken, or proposed, are in some cases contradictory or confusing, and it may well be that not even President Kennedy or Mr. McNamara yet know where they are going in the defense field.

Nevertheless, there are trends, which so far are just that: toward more centralization in military organization; toward less dependence on the concept of massive nuclear retaliation as a universal deterrent; toward a stronger and less vulnerable nuclear deterrent sooner than had been planned by the Eisenhower Administration; toward slightly stronger and more mobile limited war and unconventional war forces; toward greater civilian and less military authority; toward more conformity between the services; toward more secrecy; toward greater speed of decision; toward functionalization in weapons systems and possibly in unified commands; and toward extensive systems planning and analysis.

Sensitive Trends

All these except the last are merely trends that might be slowed or reversed, but the penchant of the new team in the Pentagon for operational analysis is here to stay.

Mr. McNamara is a man in a hurry. He is approaching the job of running the military services much as he approached the job of running the Ford Motor Company. He wants answers to his question—now. The difficulty is that the questions he poses today deal with the life and death of the nation, and some of them are unanswerable in specific terms.

The new Secretary is a man of great energy, who often arrives at his office at 7 A. M. He may then shuffle around on his desk pieces of paper with questions on them that he has thought about during the night. Eventually many of these develop into half-fledged study questions to be mullied over and put off for longer and answered if possible by one or several of the four services or their many subdivisions.

Wide Range of Questions.

The studies range over the whole gamut of military affairs. The Navy is trying to answer a relatively simple question:

"What is the future of the aircraft carrier?"

Quite a few agencies are tearing their hair over another; which, in paraphrased form, is about as follows:

"Compare Army units [company, battalion, etc.] with comparable Navy and Air Force units in numbers of men in the unit, numbers of men required to support the unit, and compare these with similar units in the principal [Western] military powers [Britain, Germany, France, Italy]."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have been asked to make a study of the nation's over-all strategy, with a deadline for completion this month.

Scores of other projects, including studies of single-service procurement and even of one service or ministry of supply for all the services, are under study. Speed is a keynote in all these and, though most of the key decisions still lie ahead, some have been or are being made.

The Air Force, for instance, may be charged with single-service management and procurement of electronic items, just as it has already been charged with development of space boosters and operations of other space projects.

Some merger of the services'

intelligence activities, possibly under J-2, or the Intelligence section of the Joint Staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, may be ordered. Studies on this have been completed. All the service viewpoints are in the Office of the Secretary of Defense—most of them opposed to any complete merger—and some decision seems to be impending.

It is understood that Allen W. Dulles, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, though not directly concerned by the projected merger, is opposed to it.

Another project—to merge the Air Force Tactical Air Command and the Army's Strategic Army Corps, or at least to put them under one command, that of the Army general—has received quick study and is also in the pre-decision stage.

There are opposing viewpoints about this project. Some feel that creation of a unified command of this nature, if it simply meant a new commander and staff, would merely add to the echelons of command and would be only slightly more effective than the present coordinating commands.

If, on the other hand, there were a real merger all down the chain of command to troop carrier squadron and battle group level, our airlift readiness capabilities might be increased. The Tactical Air Command, however, has missions, including some nuclear delivery missions, that have nothing to do with STRAC; if a merger is ordered, these would be separated and apparently assigned to some other command; perhaps to the Strategic Air Command.

Changes in organization have

begun. The Secretary of Defense and many of his subordinates have closely studied the Navy's organization of the Special Projects Office, headed by Vice Admiral William F. Raborn Jr. This office, which mounted the Polaris ballistic missile to the nuclear submarine in record time, is a task force type of organization, which cuts across bureau and other command lines and puts full authority and high priorities in Admiral Raborn's hands.

The Secretary and his subordinates were impressed by the program-evaluation review technique and by other management devices evolved by Admiral Raborn's office. Partially as a result of these studies, and because of the time lag in the construction of land-based ballistic missile bases, the Army-Air Force team charged with the construction of these bases was ordered reorganized and was placed under a single Air Force command, with the commander responsible for the entire weapons system as in Admiral Raborn's office.

Thus the principle of unified command for research and development and construction projects, as well as for operations, was adopted by the new Pentagon team.

At the same time, Mr. McNamara has established in the office of the general counsel a section devoted solely to organization. In the controller's office two sub-directorates have been set up that will attempt to compare the costs of various functional weapons systems.

These are the kinds of studies and actions being undertaken by the new regime in the Pentagon. Any and all services, branches or agencies may be employed; the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as a corporate body, may or may not participate, but the decisions are being made by the Secretary and his civilian assistants, with the approval of the President.